

Your Eminence, and thank you for your time.

Now His Eminence would like to say a few words.

Cardinal Sfeir. Thank you very much, Mr. President. We come to the White House in response to the invitation of His Excellency, President George W. Bush, and we thank him for his cordial and warm reception. I would also like to express my deep gratitude for his sincere interest in Lebanon, the freedom of its people, and in peace in Lebanon and the world.

This was a good opportunity to exchange views on the situation in Lebanon and the questions of freedom and democracy in our region. We profited from this occasion to convey to President Bush the views and aspirations of all the Lebanese.

The Lebanese, above conviction, are alarmed by the continued migration of Christian and Muslim youths due to the lack of job opportunities and the suffocating political conditions at home. We look for-

ward to see these conditions reversed because the future of Lebanon requires the talents and energy of all her children.

It is important to recall that Lebanon was the first democracy—democratic country in the region. Maybe it was not a perfect democracy, but Lebanon remains the role and the point of departure for the spread of democracy in the region. This why His Holiness, Pope John Paul II, stated that Lebanon is an ideal for freedom and democracy for the East and West, and this is what we have repeated here.

We are hopeful that the Lebanese, with the support of their friends around the world, will be able to build a better future in a free, independent, pluralistic, and sovereign Lebanon.

Thank you.

President Bush. Your Eminence, thank you, sir. Proud you're here, sir. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

Statement on House of Representatives Passage of Legislation Funding the War on Terror

March 16, 2005

I applaud the House of Representatives for its strong bipartisan support for our troops and for our strategy to win the war on terror. The people of Iraq and Afghanistan are building new democracies and defying the terrorists, and America is standing with them. Both countries are assuming greater responsibility for their own security,

which will help our troops return home as quickly as possible with the honor they have earned.

I thank the House for its quick action and look forward to working with the Senate so that all of my top priorities are included in the final legislation.

Statement on Senate Action To Allow for Environmentally Responsible
Energy Exploration in a Small Part of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge
March 16, 2005

I applaud today's vote in the Senate to allow for environmentally responsible energy exploration in a small part of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. A reliable domestic supply of energy is important to America's security and prosperity. This project will keep our economy growing by creating jobs and ensuring that businesses can expand. And it will make America less

dependent on foreign sources of energy, eventually by up to a million barrels of oil a day.

I also call on the Congress to pass a comprehensive national energy plan that will diversify supply, increase conservation and efficiency, and upgrade our energy infrastructure.

Message on the Observance of Nowruz
March 16, 2005

I send greetings to those celebrating Nowruz.

Nowruz marks the arrival of a new year and the celebration of life. It has long been an opportunity to spend time with family and friends and enjoy the beauty of nature.

Many Americans who trace their heritage to Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Azerbaijan, Turkey, and Central Asia observe this special occasion to preserve their rich heritage and ensure that their values and

traditions are passed on to future generations. This festival also reminds all Americans of the diversity that has made our Nation stronger and better.

Laura and I send our best wishes for peace and prosperity in the New Year.

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this message.

Remarks Announcing the Nomination of Representative Robert J. Portman
To Be United States Trade Representative
March 17, 2005

Good morning. I'm pleased to announce my nomination of Congressman Rob Portman to be our next United States Trade Representative. For more than a decade, Rob Portman has been a superb Representative of the Second District of Ohio. He's earned the trust of his constituents and the admiration of his colleagues.

He brings a record of achievement to this new assignment.

As a Member of the House leadership, Rob has shown he can bring together people of differing views to get things done. He's been a tireless advocate for America's manufacturers and entrepreneurs. He's a former international trade lawyer who has shown a deep dedication to free and fair